

ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AWARENESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY FROM RAJARATA UNIVERSITY, SRI LANKA

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This research examines the awareness of university students regarding environmental laws and emphasizes the significance of such awareness among this demographic. The aim is to understand the extent to which university students, upon entering society after higher education, possess the ability to identify environmental issues and intervene effectively. The importance of this research lies in highlighting the role of university education in fostering environmental consciousness and equipping students with the necessary legal knowledge to address environmental challenges. With growing concerns about the state of the environment and the urgency to mitigate environmental degradation, it is imperative that university students, as future leaders, and change agents, possess a strong understanding of environmental laws. The objectives of the study were twofold: firstly, to evaluate the level of awareness of environmental laws among university students, and secondly, to determine the variation in awareness across different faculties. The study employed a random sampling technique, encompassing 60 students across the six faculties of Rajarata University in Sri Lanka. Data collection involved assessing students' knowledge and understanding of environmental laws. The methodology employed involved administering a questionnaire to the sampled students, focusing on their knowledge of basic environmental laws and regulations. The key findings revealed that students pursuing an environmental management degree in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities demonstrated a sound understanding of environmental laws. However, students from other faculties exhibited minimal comprehension, even regarding fundamental environmental legislation. Consequently, the study's conclusion indicates that the level of awareness of environmental laws among university students is generally low. These findings underscore the need to enhance environmental law education within university curricula, irrespective of the students' chosen disciplines. By equipping students with comprehensive knowledge of environmental laws, universities can play a vital role in developing a generation of environmentally conscious citizens capable of identifying and effectively intervening in environmental problems.

Keywords: University students, Environmental laws, Awareness, Higher education, Intervention

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